Passport Office Hyderabad are being upgraded on an ongoing basis. Govt. have also decided to identify better alternate premises for the office.

(c) Does not arise.

Indian Ambassadors in Laos

2749. DR. BAPU KALDATE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Indian diplomats consider their posting at Laos a punishment and they generally decline to serve as Indian Ambassadors in Laos;

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor;

(c) whether Government are of the opinion that the present situation is because of the not so good links between India and Laos; and

(d) if so, whether Govt. propose to establish new economic and political links with Laos; if so, the steps taken by Govt. in this direction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALMAN KHURSHEED): (a) No Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) and (d) India and Laos have always enjoyed warm, cordial and friendly relations. Bilateral cooperation between the two countries has continued including through provision of training facilities for various technical courses in India to Laos candidates under ITEC and other programmes, deputation of Indian experts to Laos for carrying out feasibility studies for a number of projects, relief supplies from time to time, of cloth, medicines etc. and promotion of all-round trade and economic relations.

Minimum Wages for ICWA Employees

2750. SHRI A. NALLASIVAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the employees of ICWA are covered with minimum wages; and

(b) if not, what measures Govt. have taken to bring them under minimum wages?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALMAN KHURSHEED): (a) ICWA is an autonomous body and Government have no control over its functioning. Government has no information if the employees of the council are covered with minimum wages.

(b) Does not arise.

Comments on Sino-Indian Border Agreement

2751. SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware about the comments made by border dispute specialist Nevil Maxwel in London regarding the agreement made between India and China to maintain peace on Sino-Indian border; and

(b) if so, what is the reaction of Government on these comments?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R.L. BHATIA): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) Government have not specifically reacted to the remarks made by Mr. Maxwell. However, the agreement has been signed with the objective of ensuring peace and tranquility along the ling of actual control in the India-China border areas. It is without prejudice to the respective positions of the two countries on the boundary question. It is the expectation of Government that implementation of the agreement will strengthen the likelihood that peace and

tranquility would continue to be maintained along the India-China border, thus creating a suitable atmosphere in which the two countries can address the issue of a settlement of the boundary issue.

Pak PM's Letter to various Heads of States

2752. SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the report in the Hindustan times of November 12, 1993, that Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has addressed letters to heads of various countries to pursuade India to end its repression in the occupied territory and engage in a substantive dialogue with Pakistan;

(b) if so, what to Government's information, was the precise message conveyed by Pak-Prime Minister to the different heads of States; and

(c) what is Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R.L. BHATIA): (a) and (b) Government have seen media reports to this effect.

(c) Government remains committed to the Simla Agreement under which all differences between India and Pakistan are to be resolved peacefully and through bilateral negotiations. There can be no role for any third party.

Government will continue to apprise the international community of the facts regarding developments in Jammu & Kashmir in the correct perspective.

Diplomatic Relations with South Africa

2753. SHRI RAJNI RANJAN SAHU: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether normal diplomatic and trade relations have been established with South Africa following the withdrawal of the economic blocade against South Africa by the U.N.; and

(b) if so, what steps have been taken so far in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALMAN KHURSHEED): (a) Yes, sir.

(b) During South African Foreign Minister Mr. R.F. Botha's visit to India from November 21 to 22, 1993. India and South Africa signed protocols on the establishment of diplomatic and consular relations.

Trade relations between the two countries were earlier restored on September 25, 1993.

Steps taken to pressurise Burmese Military regime

2754. SHRI MAHENDRA PRASAD: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what steps have so far been taken by Govt. to bring pressure to bear on the Burmese Military regime to release the democratically elected leader and for restoration of democratic regime in that country, through UN and otherwise; and

(b) if so, the success, if any, achieved in that direction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R.L. BHATIA): (a) and (b) We have repeatedly called on the Government of Myanmar, both on our own and in consonance with other like-minded countries, to release the democratically elected leaders and to restore democracy in the country. We